THE NATURE OF God's Kingdom AND Dominion over MEN,

Clearly laid Open and Explained, as the ſame Relates unto theſe following Particulars. God hath Eſtabliſhed for all Nations an Obedience of Faith, a Life of Probation and Trial, wherein all things happen alike unto all. He hath alſo Permitted the Proſperity of the wicked, and Ordained Adverſity unto the Righteous.

IN A

Diſcourſe on *Deut.* 8. 2. Wherein is likewiſe ſhewed, what Influence the Knowledge of theſe things ought to have upon our Life and Converſation.

By *RICHARD STAFFORD.*

To make known unto the Sons of Men, his Mighty Acts and the Glorious Majeſty of his Kingdom. Thy Kingdom is an Everlaſting Kingdom, and thy Dominion endureth throughout all Generations, Pſal. 145. 12, 13.

And thou ſhalt Remember all the Way which the Lord thy God led thee theſe Forty Years, to Prove thee, to know what is in thine Heart, whither thou wouldeſt keep his Commandments or no.

Nihil tam dignum Deo, quam Salus Hominis. Tertullian.

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Advertiſement.

THeſe are to give Notice, that I have ſeveral other Practical Sermons or Diſcourſes of mine own Compoſing, Lying by me in Manuſcript; Which if they, who have the Plenty or Competency of this World, would thus *Conſecrate* ſome part of their *Gain* and *Subſtance unto the Lord*, Micah 4. 13. As to be *ready to Diſtribute* and *willing to Communicate* towards the outward Labour and Charge of the Printing and Publiſhing of them, it would be for the Glory of God (in *making known his Truth*, Iſa. 38. 19.) and for the Edification and Benefit of his Church and People; and conſequently it would be a *Good Work* in ſuch Perſons, who ſhall be Helpful and any ways Aſſiſtant herein; for which they would be Rewarded by God in the Life that is to come.

Charge them that are Rich in this World, that they do Good, that they be Rich in good Works, ready to Diſtribute, willing to Communicate, laying up in Store for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17, 18, 19. This is a Faithful Saying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works; theſe things are Good and Profitable unto Men, *Titus* 3. 8.

THE NATURE OF God's Kingdom, &c.

And thou ſhalt Remember all the Way which the Lord thy God led thee theſe Fourty Years in the Wilderneſs, to Humble thee, and to Prove thee, to know what was in thine Heart, whither thou wouldeſt keep his Commandments or no, Deut. 8. 2.

THE whole Oeconomy, Diſpenſation and Eſtabliſhment of all the Things of God, and of the Things pertaining to his Kingdom, in that manner as they now are, do all ſeem to be to this very End and Intent, to *prove Man, to know what is in his Heart, whether he will keep the Commandments of God or not.* This alſo cometh from the Lord of Hoſts, who is Wonderful in Counſel, and Excellent in Working; for in great Wiſdom and Contrivance hath he Ordained and Ordered Things accordingly. By the Paſſage of the Children of *Iſrael* through the Wilderneſs, was tipified and ſignified that Paſſage of the ſeveral Generations of Men and Women of the ſeveral Countries through this Earth, where they may remember all the

way, and all the ſeveral Steps and Stages of this Life, which the Lord God of all Creatures doth lead or carry them on theſe Fourty Years in the Wilderneſs, or theſe Threeſcore Years and Ten, or Fourſcore Years, which is twice Fourty Years (for ſo the Days of Man are computed in *Pſal.* 90. and it holds ſtill thereabouts) in the Wilderneſs of this Earth, which is reckoned to be about the middle part of the World. Where he hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men for to dwell on all the Face of the Earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation. The Condition of Mankind, whilſt they are a little time Breathing on this Earth, is fitly compared to that of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs on divers Reſpects: But particularly from that Deſcription which is given of it in *Pſal.* 107. 4, 5, 6, 7. *They wandered in the Wilderneſs in a ſolitary Way, they found no City to dwell in, Hungry and Thirſty, their Souls fainted in them: Then they cried unto the Lord in their Trouble, and he delivered them out of their Diſtreſſes; and he led them forth by the Right Way, that they might go to a City of Habitation.* Now here we have no continuing City, but Heaven is that City of Habitation, and this Earth is but a through-fare unto it; as we now go through a little Town or Village unto a great City. This is now our preſent Condition on Earth, as we ſtand towards God. *We wander in the Wilderneſs in a ſolitary Way.* As we are meer Men abſtracted from the Aſſiſtances of his Word and Spirit; Our Thoughts concerning God, are but Imaginations, Our Words are Miſtake or Falſhood, Our Actions are but Errors and Turnings aſide from the Right Way. This appears by thoſe Mahometants, Pagans and Indians, who are the Workmanſhip of God as well as we; but for want of the Scriptures and the Light of the Goſpel, as to that Inviſible Being who made them, or as to that Inviſible World, they and we are all entring into, They *Grope for the Wall like the Blind, and*

they

they Grope as if they had no Eyes, Isa. 59. 10. Even where is an appearance of the outward Worship of God and Christianity, How many do wander in their Acts pertaining to Religion? For even that of the Generality & Multitude is so defiled with the things which savour of Men, and comes so short off that Religion which is to the saving of the Soul, that the small Remnant is either forced to come out of it, and touch not the Unclean thing; or else see well to it that their Righteousness do exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, that their Religion do exceed the Religion of the World, as it is commonly Preached and Practised at this Day, that even his Elect Children and Servants do wander here in the Wilderness in a *Solitary Way*, being Destitute, Afflicted and Tormented, they are People by themselves, as the usual Phrase is; which indeed agrees to that Character the Holy Ghost gives of them, *Feed thy People with thy Rod, the Flock of thine Heritage which dwell Solitarily in the Wood, in the midst of Carmel*, Micah 7. 14. The People of God *Dwell Solitarily*; although they are in the midst of Neighbours and Acquaintance, such as they are. *Hungry and Thirsty, their Souls fainted in them.* This is as to God, and as to that good Satisfactory and Enduring Thing, which he hath Promised to the Sons of Men, which on this Earth is kept in Suspence, and not actually, or at least not fully given; but we are all along seeking and labouring after it.

Then they Cried unto the Lord in their Trouble, and he delivered them out of their Distresses. This Trouble and Distress, is that same *Bondage of Corruption*, and that *Groaning* and *Travelling in Pain*, spoken of, *Rom.* 8. 21, 22. Which the present State of the Creation is under. And we being a part of it, this should be our Business all our Life long, to Cry unto the Lord, and to call upon the Name of the Lord, to be delivered and saved from it: And that amidst all the Wandering of others,

or of our ſelves, he would lead us forth through this Earth, by the Right Way (there is a great deal in that) and when God doth lead, be you ſure to follow, and take notice, ſo *the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no ſtrange God with him*, Deut. 32. 12. Neither Idolatry, nor Covetouſneſs, nor Senſuality, for theſe are kinds of Idolatry, nor no ſtrange Luſt, nor no Sin, for in the Judgment of our Creator, any Sin is a *ſtrange God*, or a ſtrange Thing which ſhould not be there, *viz.* in any of his Creatures. Take theſe two Directions along with you, and obſerve them, *viz.* to follow when he leads, and that the Lord alone may lead thee, that there be no ſtrange God with thee, and I will warrant my Life for yours, that he will lead you, and alſo bring you by the Right Way unto a City of Habitation; which is Heaven, the Habitation of his Holineſs (for the ſame Power that ſent us here, will tranſlate us up to that High and Lofty Place, if we ſhall be found meet and worthy, where we ſhall be no longer Travellers, Pilgrims, or Strangers; but in a proper and true Sence Fellow-Citizens and Inhabitants for ever to abide. *He led them forth by the Right Way.* As for my ſelf, in my Journeying and Travelling, I have miſtook the Way, but by enquiry and going forward, I always arrived at the place at laſt where I would be. It is the very ſame in our way to Heaven. People may, yea and they do often miſtake the Right Way; but if they will keep on in the *Way of Holineſs* (which the *Unclean ſhall not paſs over*, Iſa. 35. 8.) if they will ſeek out of the Book of the Lord, and Read in the ſure Word of Propheſie; if they will take heed to the Day Dawn and the Day Star in their Hearts, and do according to the Light which that ſhews them. If they will confer Experiences with the Saints that are on the Earth (*for they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another*) But above all, if they will be ſure to be Travelling on, and in motion, and always making towards

towards it, though perhaps in Twenty Miles we may go half a Mile or more about; though in Sailing over the Sea of this Life, ſometimes we cannot go directly forwards, by reaſon of contrary Winds; yet we may Sail this way and that way to make towards it, and at laſt, *God bringeth them to their deſired Haven*, Pſal. 107. 30. We Read in the *Acts* of the Apoſtles of the *Fair Haven*, Put one Letter more in, and *Haven* ſpells *Heaven*, which indeed is the *Fair Haven*; for it is all Fair and Clear there, it being above all Winds and Storms. This is our deſired Haven, or the Haven where we would be.

More need not to be ſaid to Paralel our Condition here on Earth for Threeſcore Years and Ten, or Fourſcore Years, with that of the Wilderneſs for Fourty Years. In the Text it is ſaid, To Humble thee. And this ſeems to be the very Reaſon of thoſe ſeveral ſeve.e and harſh Diſpenſations of his Providence, as in ſending upon us Afflictions, Poverty, Sickneſs, and ſuch like. As alſo why he made us thus, and placed us in ſuch *vile Bodies*, Phil. 3. 21. In the vulgar Latin, there for it is *Corpus Humilitatis*, which ſignifies the Body of our Humiliation; or ſuch a Body as God hath prepared, ordered, and thought fit for this our preſent State of Humiliation and Imperfection, *To Humble us*. We are as it were Men and Women in Carcaſes. And truly if we know our ſelves, and particularly our own outward Frame, there is all the reaſon in the World, as God in making us thus, and cloathing us with ſuch Garments of Fleſh, which are ſo courſe, if I may ſo expreſs it, filthy and weak and little, did it on purpoſe and deſign to Humble us: So we ſhould be indeed Humbled. For wherefore is Earth and Aſhes Proud? Conſider what were we whilſt in the Womb; from thence we were *caſt out to the loathing of our Perſon in the Day that we were Born*, Ezek. 16.5. What are we now? A Breathing

Clod of Clay? A sink of Flegm and Excrements? What shall we be? Meat for Worms, Ghastlineſs, stink and Corruption? Canst thou throughly think upon this and not be Humbled? However to such as will be Obedient, the Language of Truth speaks on this wise, It is the Will of our Heavenly Father and Creator, that during this short time we are in this Wilderneſs of the Earth, we should be very Low, Trembling and Poor in Spirit. Even by thine own Frame and Constitution, *He hath shewed thee O Man* (from within thy self) *what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, to walk humbly with thy God*, Micah 6. 8. And see that thou comply with his Mind herein.

The Text goes on to add, *to prove thee, to know what is in thine Heart, whither thou wouldest keep his Commandments or no.* Here is the Principal Intent Specified; and under this is comprised the Reason of almost all his doings towards the Children of Men, from the Day he first Created them on the Earth, until the End of time. He proved our first Parents, *Adam* and *Eve*, to know what was in their Hearts, whither they would keep his Commandments or no; and they did not keep them. And so he did afterward, Prove *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, who did keep them according to the Covenant and Measure as he did accept of. *For I know* Abraham *that he will command his Children and his Houshold after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord*, Gen. 18. 19. And so it is of all the Descendants from *Abraham* ever since, some did keep his Commandments, and some did not. Besides that constant and continued Proving them throughout their Life, God doth sometimes Prove his Children in an extraordinary manner, as he did tempt *Abraham* to offer up his Son *Isaac*, which was a great Instance of his Faith, and whereby he did know that he Feared God. Seeng thou hast not witholden thy Son, thine only Son from me, even the Best and deareſt thing,

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and allthat he had of that Nature. It is a Wonderful thing to Conſider how he doth Prove all the Generations and Perſons of Mankind, one after this manner, and another after that, according to their different Circumſtances and Condition of Life, to know what is in their Hearts, whither they will keep his Commandments or no. The whole Hiſtory of the Bible, and of all his Servants, and Reaſonable Creatures mentioned therein, are to this purpoſe. The Servants of God did keep his Commandments, but all his Creatures, whom he had endued with Reaſon, did not. And ſo it is of all the Men and Women that ever trod upon this Earth; whoſe Names, though they are not Recorded in that Book, yet they are in the Regiſter of him, *Who bringeth out that great Hoſt of his Creation by number, and calleth them all by their Names.* So likewiſe beſides the ordinary manner of dealing with his People, he did tempt and prove *Job* by his great and extraordinary Afflictions, who in all them Sinned not, nor yet Charged God fooliſhly; for indeed God did well and wiſely as to him. *What is Man that thou ſhouldeſt Magnifie him, and that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine Heart upon him, and that thou ſhouldſt Viſit him every Morning, and try him every Moment*, Job 7. 17, 18. All things are full of Temptation, even to the neceſſary Victuals which we Eat, for there may be Gluttony; and to the Clothes which we wear, for there may be Pride; even to all our Thoughts (and we do think continually) for there may be, and too often is, Vanity and Evil. To our Words, for in the *multitude of them, there wants not Sin*; and we may ſoon Speak Falſhood or Folly; and ſo to our Actions and Doings; for there Sin, Iniquity, and Tranſgreſſion do beſet us round, and it is eaſy falling into any of them, And ſo all Companies and Converſation with our fellow Creatures do prove a Snare unto us, or there is Man Pleaſing and Perverting the thing that

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is Right, to humour and comply with thoſe that are above us in outward Degree or Riches. As alſo there is a fear of *Bearing Witneſs unto the Truth*, and Speaking it out, leaſt they ſhould fall under the Diſpleaſure of Men. Many ſuch like things do ſhew that the Trial of Man is had every Moment, as alſo it is had when he is at, and amidſt the Worſhip and Service of God, and at Religious Duties.

It is properly and truly a Life of Probation and Trial. And we are here upon, or according to our good or ill Behaviour, ſo we ſhall have the Eternal Favour of God, or be rejected by him. Like as Apprentices are commonly put out a Month before hand for Trial, to ſee whither the maſter will take them for Seven Years or not, ſo theſe Seventy Years on this Earth, we Men and Women are upon Trial for all Eternity; God hereby Proving us, whither we ſhall be meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, or Reprobates. *Reprobate Silver ſhall Men call them, becauſe the Lord hath Rejected them*, Jer. 6. 30. As it is with the Earth it ſelf, ſo it will be with the Men and Women, the Reaſonable Inhabitants thereof. *For the Earth which drinketh in the Rain that cometh oft upon it, receiveth Bleſſing from God. But that which beareth Thornes and Briers, is Rejected, and is nigh unto Curſing, whoſe End is to be Burned*, Heb. 6. 7. 8. The good Fiſhes are to be gathered into Veſſels, and the bad are to be caſt away. *So ſhall it be at the End of the World. The Angels ſhall come forth and ſhall Sever the Wicked from among the Juſt.* Mat. 13. 41, 42. So God will do at the End of World, but all this mean while, during which the Generations paſs through here, whither it be Six or Seven Thouſand Years, it is the time of their Probation and Trial, but after that is over, and finiſhed, God will then proceed to a Deciſion and Sentence.

For the more effectual Trial and Probation of Mankind, He hath alſo ordained a Life of Faith, and a State

State of Abſence from the Lord, which is Grounded from 2 *Cor.* 5. 6, 7. *Whilſt we are at home in the Body, we are abſent from the Lord, for we Walk by Faith and not by Sight.* The right Underſtanding of theſe two things, This Life of Trial and Probation, and this walking by Faith do clearly open unto us the Nature of God's Kingdom, and Dominion over us Men. It was never known in any Nation, Country and Language, that the People there ſhould obey a King or Ruler, whom neither they themſelves, nor yet any of his Subjects ever ſaw: Which laſt it put in, becauſe whereas Earthly Kings do Rule over Countreys of vaſt Extent and Circumference, and of Millions of Inhabitants who are diſperſed all over it; and he being but little and Circumſcribed in Paſſion as other Men, it ſeldom or never happens that he doth ſee all his Subjects, nor yet do all his Subjects ever ſee him. But yet a very great many do, and have ſeen him: So that all the others having them for undoubted Witneſſes and Aſſurance, that there is ſuch an One, they do, and muſt obey him, nevertheleſs although they have not ſeen him. But as to God, tho' he fills Heaven and Earth, and all things, and all places, with his Preſence; though his Kingdom is an everlaſting Kingdom, and his Dominion endureth throughout all Generations; yet no Man of any Generation or Country did ever ſee him. *No Man hath ſeen God at any time: The Only begotten Son, which is in the Boſom of the Father, he hath declared him,* John 1. 18. And yet he requires and expects to be obeyed by all Nations, Kindred and Languages, yea by all the Inhabitants of the World. Whom we are to Obey, though we do not ſee him, and all One as if we did ſee him. And though God gives no preſent Viſible Recompence, but contrariwiſe, We often ſuſtain outward Loſs, Inconvenience and Hardſhip for performing Service unto him, yet he Requires it. Hereby God is Glorified, and here is the

Faith

Faith and Patience of the Saints to perform it nevertheleſs. *Now Faith is the Subſtance of things hoped for, and the Evidence of things not ſeen.* And this Faith doth properly terminate upon an Unſeen God, as it's Obeject. *Whom having not ſeen ye Love, in whom, though ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye Rejoyce with* Joy Unſpeakable and full of Glory. Receiving the End of your Faith, the Salvation of your Souls, 1 *Pet.* 1. 8, 9. We Read very often in Scripture of the Name of the Lord, *The Heathen ſhall fear the Name of the Lord, ſo declare the Name of the Lord in* Zion, Pſal. 102. 15, 21. And of calling on the *Name of the Lord.* Which Name of the Lord (to ſpeak after the manner of Men) doth ſuppoſe and import as much, as if his Perſon were diſtant, and not ſeen by us. But here to purſue the like Reaſoning, as is in *Pſal.* 75. 1. *Unto thee, O God do we give Thanks: Unto thee do we give Thanks; for that thy Name is near, thy Wonderous Works declare.* So here it is, Unto thee O God do we yield Obedience, and render Worſhip, for that thy Name, or rather thy Perſon included in that Name, is real thy Viſible Works declare, which we cannot ſo much as look upwards or downwards; or without doors, but we muſt ſee them. We may behold with our outward Bodily Eyes, the Truth and Reality of what he hath affirmed, *for I lift up my Hand to Heaven, and ſay, I Live for ever,* Deut, 32. 40. For we do, or may continually ſee that vaſt fabrick of the Heavens and the Earth, and all therein contained, upheld by the Word of his Power, in a moſt Wonderful and Aſtoniſhing manner. That vaſt and wide Roof of the Firmament, or Sky is kept up by his Almighty and Viſible Hand, without any Viſible Beams or Pillars. By the way, the declaring of theſe things unto ye, is a proper and uſeful kind of Preaching, Becauſe it is a *Publiſhing the Name of the Lord, Aſcribe ye greatneſs unto our God,* Deut. 32. 2. And a ſpeaking of the *Wonderful*

Acts

Works of God, Acts 2. 11. Which the Apoſtles did to their Hear-ers.

It is a wonderful thing to Conſider how the God, who made all things, and filleth all things, ſhould yet be ſo little manifeſted unto Men; that he, who is all Brightneſs and Glory, ſhould not be ſeen amongſt us; that he, who made and faſhioned us, in whom we live and move and have our being, ſhould be ſo little perceived by us; that when he *filleth Heaven and Earth with his Preſence*, yet any ſhould Live without God in the World. Surely Darkneſs hath covered the Earth, and groſs Darkneſs the People. The Sun gives Light upon it by Day, and the Moon by Night; and yet there is a greater Obſcurity round about, which the dull Element perceives not. There is yet a worſe and greater Obſcurity in thoſe, who ſee and walk thereon. Strange! That Hitherto it ſhould not be as yet Univerſally fulfilled as to all the Inhabitants of the Earth, *At that Day ſhall a Man look to his Maker, and his Eyes ſhall have Reſpect unto the Holy One of* Iſrael, *Iſa.* 17. 7. Whom he might ſee with the Eyes of his Uuderſtanding being enlightened, as he doth with his outward Bodily Eyes behold the Works of God, and the Earth which he Treads on. By the Air he Breaths and moves in, he might have a Sence and Reſemblance of him that is Inviſible. Who doth alſo beſet him behind and before, is with him in his going out, and coming in, and is acquainted with all his Ways. The leaſt conceiving and Inward Reaſoning, will Inſtantly lead unto the acquaintance of him, Lift up your Eyes on High, and behold who hath Created theſe things; for it muſt be ſome One who made all theſe things; for we do conclude, and know of the Houſes which we Inhabit, that ſome did Build them, although that was before we were Born. And this great Houſe of the World muſt needs have been framed by him, who *Built all things*; *and*

there

that is God, Heb. 3. 4. *Through Faith we understand that the Worlds were Framed by the Word of God; so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear*, Heb. 11. 2. The Heavens continue standing as they were from the Days of the Creation; yet that once was, and must needs have been. But then further, the very continuance and upholding of them doth plainly Demonstrate, and Point out his Eternal Power and Godhead.

Besides the Ignorance, Sottishness, and Negligence of Man in *Understanding and Seeking God*, Psal. 14. 2. Some Reason why he is not so Known, and Apprehended by the Inhabitants of the Earth, is through his own Ordering, if I may so Speak; for I gather it from his own Word of Truth, *Verily, thou art a God that hidest thy self, O God of Israel the Saviour*, Isa. 45. 15. If I may so express it, tho' he is in them, and before them, yet he doth hide *himself*, behind the Skreen of Created things. *And it came to pass that in the Morning Watch, the Lord looked unto the Host of the Egyptians through the Pillar of Fire, and of the Cloud*, Exod. 14. 24. And so he doth continually look unto the Inhabitants of the Earth, through the material and visible things, although we cannot see him, Because he is Immaterial and Invisible. God seeth us, when we do not see him. He seeth us always, but we do not see him at any time. *Behold, I Go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left Hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him. He hideth himself on the Right Hand* (Mark that Phrase, again of hiding himself) *that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the Way that I take* (this again confirms what is aforesaid, though we do not see God, yet God seeth us) *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as Gold*, Job 23. 8, 9, 10. By annexing which last here his Spirit by the Mouth of *Job*, doth Intimate and set forth, that God doth thus, on purpose

poſe to *try Man.* This ſame Truth and Obſervation is yet more clearly Expreſſed in *Deut.* 32. 20. Which alſo comes directly to the ſence of my Text, to Prove thee, to know what is in thine Heart, whither thou wilt keep his Commandments or no: Here God ſpeaks on this wiſe, *I will hide my Face from them, I will ſee what their End ſhall be; for they are a very froward Generation, Children in whom is no Faith.* Now put all this together, and we are given to underſtand, that when God hideth himſelf, and hideth his Face, as he hath done ſince the Creation, hereby he doth Try and Prove the Children of Men, and knows what is in their Hearts, and ſees what their End will be. In *Deut.* 32. There is as it were a Hiſtory and Rehearſal of all that Ignorance, Diſobedience, Sottiſhneſs, Blindneſs, Folly, and Ingratitude of Mankind towards their God; and the Reaſon of all is as it were ſummed up, and Rendred in the Twentieth Verſe, becauſe *God hideth his Face*, and becauſe *they are a froward Generation, Children in whom is no Faith.* For had they but any Faith, they might find out God; notwithſtanding he is Inviſible, and he hideth himſelf, and he hideth his Face; and if they did but once find him out, and know him, it is impoſſible that ever Man, a Reaſonable Creature, ſhould carry himſelf thus perverſly and contrariwiſe towards God, as he hath done. Although the People of the World do reckon upon Sin, as a thing of Naught, of no Significancy and of no Account, yet all Sin is againſt God. And I am perſuaded that (notwithſtanding it is ſo rife, common and cuſtomary in the World, as alas now it is) People would no more commit Sin againſt God, if they did ſee him with his Bow bent and his Sword drawn (the Scripture hath deſcribed him in that manner) ready to take Vengeance on them for the ſame, and if they did throughly know and believe how that there is a Juſt Recompence of Reward annexed to every

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Transgreſſion and Diſobedience, than now they dare Curſe the King to his Face, for which they ſhould incur his ſevere Wrath and Diſpleaſure Immediately. But if God was as Viſible as our Governours after the Fleſh are, then there could be no ſuch thing as Faith at all, there could be no Trial of Obedience from the Heart (for it might be done only with outward Act) How could he then ſo effectually Prove us, to know what is in our Heart, whither we will keep his Commandments or no. Though God is not Viſible, yet his Works are: By the greatneſs and vaſtneſs, whereof we may very well Apprehend and Aſcribe greatneſs unto our God, for it muſt needs be a Great God who hath Created ſuch great things. So, although he is Inviſible, yet his exceeding Greatneſs ſhould make us more afraid; and keep us more in Subjection, then all viſible Terrors or Temptations, which are but little; as alſo his Eternal Promiſes and Threatnings ſhould weigh more with us, then all preſent things, which are but momentary and ſudden.

Here is the *Revelation of the Myſtery which was kept ſecret ſince the World began, but now is made manifeſt, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the Everlaſting God made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith*, Rom. 16. 25, 26. This thing, an *Obedience of Faith*, to Obey God whom we have not ſeen, and to Obey for unſeen things; all which is Apprehended by Faith, whoſe Object is an unſeen God, and unſeen Things. Though it is made known and manifeſt enough by the Scriptures and by the Goſpel, and though it hath been Preached and Declared to the World, yet it is a *Myſtery* to them at this Day. But his Children and Servants, his Elect and Choſen Ones do underſtand as well what it is to Obey and Serve an unſeen God, for unſeen Things, as the Labourers in the Vineyard did, when they worked for a Peny a Day, or

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as Servants and Labourers know for whom and or what they Labour, when they do work for their ſaſters according to the Fleſh for Yearly Wages, or for ſo much a Day. An Obedience of Faith doth aprehend things Future, all one as things preſent; for faith is the Subſtance of things hoped for. Now thing hoped for, are not as yet. And though ſome may be apt to Imagine that things not yet, are not Subſtanc, yet the Holy Ghoſt knew better, when he expreſſed i after that manner, then Scoffers and Unbelievers, who are apt to Object, and ſay on this wiſe. For I pray you judge ye in your own Reaſon, is there not as much Subſtance in things diſtant as in things near? Is there not the ſame Subſtance in things to come, as in things preſent? For even things preſent were once to come. Is there not as much Subſtance in Heaven as in Earth? I believe, that whoſoever ſhall be counted worthy to enter therein, he will find Ten Thouſand times more. But the People of this World are Ignorant, and Puzzled at this Myſtery of an Obedience of Faith, becauſe the Promiſes and Threatnings of God are future and to come, therefore People do not Regard nor Fear them. Whereas Faith would here receive and embrace thoſe Promiſes, and alſo be Overawed by the Threatnings; notwithſtanding they are future and Diſtant, all one as if they were preſent and ſenſible before them. But the Generality of the World are a *very froward Generation, Children in whom is no Faith.* There is little or no true Faith amongſt Men. And hereupon, *Becauſe Sentence againſt an Evil Work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully ſet in them to do Evil*, Eccleſ. 8. 11. There is a great deal in this. I had almoſt ſaid, that this is the Cauſe and Reaſon of all the Irreligion and Ungodlineſs, Sin and Wickedneſs, that is abroad in the Earth, becauſe God doth not preſently Puniſh Men and Women for the ſame. It is this which makes

their Armour-Proof and Hardned against the Ministry of his Word, and our Denunciation of the Terrors of the Lord against them. And so it is of that Evil People which refuse to hear my Words, which walk in the Imagination of their Hearts. *Jer.* 13. 10. For both sorts think in their Hearts, although the Word & the Ministry thereof do speak Evil and Misery to us, yet nothing comes of it. For we are as Healthful in Body, as Prosperous in outward Estate, and seem as Merry and contented in Mind as other People. The Tabernacles of Robbers Prosper, and they that provoke God are secure into whose Hands God bringeth abundantly, *Job* 12. 6. *Wherefore do the Wicked Live, become old, yea, mighty in Power. Their Seed is Established in their sight with them, and their Offspring before their Eyes. Their Houses are safe from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them, Their Bull Gendereth, and faileth not, their Cow Calveth, and Casteth not her Calf,* Job 21. 7, 8, 9, 10. So their Ground bringeth forth Corn and Grass, all one as that of other People. *God is kind to the Unthankful and to the Evil,* Luke 3. 37. *For he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and Unjust,* Mat. 6. 35. *There is a Just Man that perisheth in his Righteousness, and there is a Wicked Man that prolongeth his Life in his Wickedness,* Eccles. 7. 15. *There be Just Men unto whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked; again there be Wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous,* Eccles. 8. 14. *No Man knoweth Love or Hatred* (that is of God) *by all that is before him. All things come alike to all. There is one event to the Righteous and the Wicked, to the Good, to the Clean and the Unclean; to him that Sacrificeth, and to him that Sacrificeth not, as is the Good so is the Sinner, and he that Sweareth, as he that Feareth an Oath,* Eccles. 9. 1, 2. Though God hath been Pleased to ordain and suffer it so to be; yet it is before said, that the *Righteous, and the Wise, and their Works, are in the Hand of*

God.

God. And ſo it follows by the ſame Conſequence of things, that the Works and Doings of Sinners and the Wicked, are in the memorial and Regiſter of God, even for him to bring forth the ſame unto future Judgment, and make a ſeveral Diſtribution thereupon. For *ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, All things continue as they were ſince the beginning of the Creation,* 2 Pet. 3. 4. And ſo People are Born, Marry and Die Promiſcuouſly and Indifferently without any odds between Righteous and Wicked, Godlineſs or Ungodlineſs, Obedience or Diſobedience, of one Man between another. The Scriptures do ſpeak fully and abundantly hereof in many places; and alſo they mention particularly in 2 *Pet.* 3. how the Sinners and Wicked, *who walk after their own Luſts,* do hereupon Sin yet more and more, and go on ſecurely, and without fear, becauſe of their preſent Proſperity and Impunity in this Life. Whereas I profeſs Solemnly and Seriouſly as I ſee and obſerve theſe things, to me it is the greateſt Argument, Demonſtration, and full Aſſurance, that all things are indeed ſo as they are ſpoken of in Scripture. And I do through this, which hath been a Cloud and Stumbling Block to ſome, ſee clearly and apprehend plainly the Nature of God's Kingdom and Dominion over Men, to be on this wiſe, *viz.* As *about the time of Forty Years, he ſuffered the manners of the* Iſraelites *in the Wilderneſs,* Acts 13. 18. ſaith our Text, *To prove them.* In like manner for about the time of Threeſcore Years and Ten, or Fourſcore Years, he doth ſuffer the manners of all the ſeveral Perſons of Men and Women, of all Countreys in this Wilderneſs of the Earth, letting them go on as they will, to *ſee what they will do, and what their End will be.* This is his Eternal Decree which ſeems to be Eſtabliſhed upon great Wiſdom; for hereby he doth Effectually prove them, to know what is in their Heart, whither they will keep his Commandments or no. This very ſame Order

and Diſpenſation of the things of God towards us Men, may be underſtood from that of the Apoſtle, as indeed the whole Series & Deſign of Scripture hath a Relation and Tendency to what he hath written, *For we muſt all appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive for the things done in the Body, according to that he hath done, whither it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. 5. 10. Whereby it is clearly ſhewn forth and intimated, that People do not receive in this Life according to the things that they have here done in the Body, but they will receive for them in the Day of Judgment, and in the ſucceeding Eternity. There will be nothing done of this, until theſe Bodies are laid in the Graves, and *an Hour is coming after that, in the which all that are in their Graves ſhall hear his Voice, and ſhall come forth, they that have done good unto the Reſurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil, unto the Reſurrection of Damnation*, John 5. 28, 29. God will make one Work and Reckoning of it altogether, according to *Mat.* 25. 32. *And before him ſhall be gathered all Nations*, &c. *And the Deſtruction of the Sinners and Tranſgreſſors ſhall be together*, Iſa. 1. 28. Even of all Generations and Countries, although now they Live out their appointed time, and Dye as other Men. The Spirit of God ſaith by the ſame *Iſaiah*, The *Sinner being an Hundred Years Old, ſhall be accurſed*, Iſa. 65. 20. The Word of God doth Speak Evil of him now, and Evil ſhall befal him hereafter; although as yet he hath felt nothing of outward Harm or Evil. Good Men have been offended at the preſent Proſperity and Impunity of the Wicked. We hear frequently thereof in the Old Teſtament, but not altogether ſo much in the New. Thoſe who had chiefly Temporal Promiſes to encourage them to Obedience, might well Startle and Stumble, when the Diſobedient received the ſame in Effect. *Verily I have cleanſed my Heart in vain*, Pſal. 73. 13. There was not then ſo clear a Revelation of the Judgment to come,

and

and of the ſucceeding Eternity, which is to make a wide Deciſion and vaſt Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked. This would have inſtantly ſatisfied all their doubts. But now Chriſtians, who are aſſured of all this have no Reaſon to be Envious at the Foolish, when they ſee the Proſperity of the Wicked. Yet, Do ye think the Scripture ſaith in vain? *The Spirit that dwelleth in us, luſteth to Envy*, Jam. 4. 5. The difference between the Sins of the Regenerate and Unregenerate is, the Regenerate have little motions and tendencies towards the ſame Sins, which they cruſh and keep ſhort, but the others ſuffer them to break forth into open Act. And ſo there are at this Day in ſincere good People, ſome little Inclinations or Luſtings to Envy. They are apt to be Grieved, that they who Provoke or Deſpiſe God, ſhould Flouriſh and ſeem outwardly in better Plight then themſelves. There is a carnal Intermixture, ſomething for themſelves, when they Cry out O Lord, How long ſhall the Wicked Triumph? How long wilt thou ſuffer them to do on this wiſe? Perhaps they have their Portion in this Life, *Pſal.* 17. 14. As *Auguſtine* did obſerve, that was the Reaſon of the long Proſperity and Continuance of the Roman Empire, for their Exerciſe of Moral Vertues. Like, as we Read in One of the Prophets, *That God did give* Egypt *to* Nebuchadnezzar *for Wages*, in ſerving him with his Army in ſuch a Work as he would have done. And this ſame is the very Reaſon why many People have Health and Proſperity, Riches and long Life, who will yet never go to Heaven; but they are Rewarded here for that little good they have done. And therefore the Pſalmiſt Prays by the Spirit, *Deliver my Soul from Men, which are thy Hand O Lord, from Men of the World, which have their Portion in this Life, and whoſe Belly thou filleſt with thy hid Treaſure.* They are full of Children, and leave the reſt of their Subſtance to their Babes. This would not

content and satisfy him, but he was rather afraid of it. As for me (By which kind of Speech he would Distinguish and Exempt himself from them) I will behold thy Face in Righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy Likeness. I have Read of a certain Godly Man, who when he was Exalted to great Preferment and Revenues, he did very much fear, least thereby God meant to give him his Portion in this Life; and thereupon he was doubtful whither he should accept of it, yet afterwards he did. However we are to let God alone with the Ways of his Providence; for he, and not we poor Wretches, knoweth what he hath to do. How he deals with others, what is that to us? We may rest fully satisfied, and most certainly assured with what the Wise Man saith, *Though a Sinner do Evil an Hundred times and his Days be Prolonged, yet surely I know it shall be well with them which Fear God, which Fear before him*, Eccles. 8, 12. God cannot be Unrighteous; and if he deals more Bountifully with the Wicked in this Life then with you, certainly you will fare better then they in that Life which is to come. It will be better for those who in the Days of their Flesh, Lived before him in Righteousness and true Holiness, then with those who in the same Days of their Flesh did Despise God, or Lived in some Transgression or Disobedience the same while. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right? Yea, He shall do Right, and make an exact Distribution (*Judgment will I lay to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummet*) to every Man according as his Work hath been. Doth any wise or knowing Man envy Oxen or Sheep as he sees them Feeding in good Pastures, but he rather Pities the poor Creatures, because he apprehends what it is for, to Fat them for the Shambles. This is the very case as to the Prosperity of the Wicked or Sinners, *Righteous art thou O Lord when I plead with thee, yet let me Talk with thee of thy Judgments. Wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked Prosper?*

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Wherefore are all they happy that deal very Treacherously, thou haſt planted them. Yea, they have taken Root, they grow, yea, they bring forth Fruit. Thou art near in their Mouth (and ſo they were outward Worſhippers, and did talk of God in a general Way) *and far from their Reins. But thou O Lord knoweſt me, thou haſt ſeen and tried my Heart towards thee* (whereby the Prophet doth import his own ſincere Service towards God, and yet it was not outwardly ſo well with him: But he goes on to add,) *Pluck them out like Sheep for the Slaughter, and prepare them for the Day of Slaughter*, Jer. 12. 1, 2, 3. And ſo the Apoſtle *James* ſaith by the Spirit unto the Rich Men, *Ye have Lived in Pleaſure on the Earth, and been Wanton, and Nouriſhed your Hearts as in the Day of Slaughter*, Jam. 5. 5. Tremble at this ye Gentry and Senſualiſts, and Merry Men of this preſent Age and Generation. Though thoſe Bruitiſh Men know it not, neither doth a Fool underſtand this, What? It follows, *When the Wicked ſpring as the Graſs, and when all the Workers of Iniquity do Flouriſh, it is* (there it is Pointed out) *that they ſhall be deſtroyed for ever*, Pſal. 92. 6, 7. So it will be for ever at laſt, although they are not preſently deſtroyed at the very ſame time when they commit their Wickedneſs and Iniquity. Amalek *was the firſt of the Nations, but his latter End ſhall be, that he periſh for ever*, Num. 24. 20. The Decree and Purpoſe of God ſtands on this wiſe, *For the Lord God of Recompences ſhall ſurely Requite*, Jer. 51. 56. At the time Appointed, when they come Dye, and after that the Judgment.

As by a Right Underſtanding of the Nature of God's Kingdom and Dominion over us Men, we come to know the very Reaſon why he doth not preſently Puniſh Sinners, but oftentimes ſuffers them to Proſper. So by the ſame Reaſon of things we may learn, wherefore he ſuffers or inflicts Afflictions and Calamities on Godly and Righteous People. It is hard and ſomirk to think in

ones Mind, Verily *I have cleanſed my Heart in vain, and waſhed my Hands in Innocency; for all the Day long have I been Plagued, and Chaſtned every Morning*, Pſal. 73. 13, 14. That when Man ſerves God diligently and faithfully, and leads an upright and innocent Life, that then he ſhould meet with greater and ſorer Troubles. To think this is Painful to One. Our Nature is Impatient thereat and Reſents it hardly. But this was the Lot of the Generation of thy Children in former Days; and therefore we are not to think that any ſtrange or new thing, hath happened unto us. *But call to Remembrance the former Days in which after ye were Illuminated, ye endured a great fight of Afflictions, Partly, whilſt ye were made a gazing Stock, both by Reproaches and Afflictions; and whilſt ye became Companions of them that were ſo uſed*, Heb. 10.32,33. The Apoſtle writes this to thoſe precious and beſt Saints and Servants of God which were in that Day. And I know a Man who hath had a good Mind towards God from his tender Years, who hath made it his buſineſs and conſtant endeavour to keep, and alſo to do the Commandments from his Youth up; who when he hath been Perſecuted in Body, and been oppreſſed and rendred Poor in his outward Eſtate, It hath been Tauntingly and Sarcaſtically ſaid unto him, Is this all that your Prayers, Religion, and Faſting hath come unto? The Scoffer did go on to add, If I were to be Religious, I would be Religious for ſomewhat, and not thereby to be Rendred Miſerable (which might indeed be done in their meaning by cloſe Methods of Hypocriſy, but not by continuing whole and ſtedfaſt in God's Covenant, without Tranſgreſſion of, or Variation from ſome part of his written Word, conſidering how the World hath been, and is) but they who talk after this manner, have not Faith, and they know not what it is to Live by Faith, or to render an Obedience of Faith. We Read ſomewhat like hereof in the Book of the Lord. *Many*

there

there be which ſay of my Soul, There is no help for him in God, Selah. Pſal. 3. 2. *My Tears have been my Meat Day and Night, while they Continually ſay unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember theſe things, I pour out my Soul in me, as with a Sword in mine Bones, mine Enemies Reproach me, while they ſay Daily unto me, Where is thy God?* Pſal. 42. 2, 3, 10. *I Remembred God, and was Troubled, I Complained, and my Spirit was Overwhelmed,* Selah. *I have conſidered the Days of Old, the Years of Ancient Times, I Call to Remembrance my Song in the Night, I Commune with mine own Heart, and my Spirit made diligent ſearch,* Pſal. 77. 3. Yea, I have ſometimes obſerved, that when I have walked with God yet more cloſely, and have waited upon him more diligently, being conſcious of no Sin or Fault, yet a greater Affliction or Vexation hath enſued immediately thereupon. Truly this was a very ſore Trial, that when one ſhould more expect and hope for Good from the Hands of God, then to meet with Evil. Yea, An horrible Thought and Temptation hath hereupon aroſe in my Mind (which indeed hath had that Effect, as to make me abate and diminiſh ſomewhat from my former Zeal and Fervency, like unto that Saying of him, Behold, *This Evil is of the Lord, What ſhould I wait for the Lord any longer,* 2 Kings 6. 33. If only this comes of my Serving of God, ſhall I deſiſt and leave it off, and betake my ſelf to the like Ungodly Careleſs Life, or Formal Outſide Religion, which others do of my Circumſtances, Condition and Years. God forbid, I abhor the thoughts of it from the bottom of my Heart. But I will rather on the contrary make the true and right Inference, That Evil, Oppoſition and Trouble came from Satan the Adverſary (which God did ſuffer and overrule) to prove and try me yet more (wherefore I will yet more Réſiſt Satan, and act yet greater Revenge upon him) for there is a good ſort of *Revenge* mentioned in 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. To the overthrow

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of his Kingdom, both in my ſelf and others. Hitherto I have ſerved the God of *Iſrael* a little, but now I will ſerve him much, and cleave yet more cloſely unto him, for this Trouble and Affliction which hath befaln me. I will hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it. *Come and let us* (yet more) *Return unto the Lord, for he hath broken, and he will heal us; he hath ſmitten, and he will bind us up. After two Days will he revive us, in the third Day he will raiſe us up, and we ſhall Live in his Sight. Then ſhall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.* Hoſ. 6. 1, 2, 3. We may ſee and know more of God through the Dark Cloud of Afflictions and Troubles: As alſo then ſhall we know, if we follow on, to know the Lord, in the various Diſpenſations of his Providence, and in the ſeveral kinds of Trial, Temtation and Exerciſes, which he ordains or ſuffers to fall on us. And here it is, and ſhould be, that as we keep on Travelling, whither the Way under our Feet be Dry and Good, or Wet and Dirty, through Thick and Thin, as we commonly ſay. As the Sailer ſtill makes towards the Haven, he is bound unto, come Fair Weather or Foul, gentle Gales, or *Euroclydons*, which ſignifies Tempeſtuous Winds: So here is the Faith and Patience of the Saints, that the Righteous ſhould hold on his Way, and he that hath clean Hands, be ſtronger and ſtronger. For God and Heaven I am bent, bound and reſolved, this is my Journeys End, and here is my Deſired Haven, or the Haven where I would be. And I hope that by his Grace, and Strengthening me with Strength in my Soul (which I always ask in Prayer) for I am come to that Stedfaſtneſs and Purpoſe of Mind herein, that you may ſooner turn a Dromedary in his Courſe, then turn me aſide from going on ſtill in that way towards God, and the Habitation of his Holineſs, which he hath Chalked out in his Word, and ſhewed me in my Mind (what I ſpeak of my ſelf, when I Declare my own Experiences,

I would that ye apply it to your ſelves alſo, for we are Fellow-Servants and Fellow-Travellers) through Good and Evil Report, through Shame and Diſhonour, as deceivers and yet true, in Afflictions, in Neceſſities, in Diſtreſſes, through Plenty and Poverty, in Sickneſs and Health, in Proſperity and Adverſity, ſometimes at Liberty, and again through Priſons, Up-hill and Down-hill, and ſometimes in a Plain, as our Way lies. To have now, and then a ſmooth Voyage, and then to be toſſed to and fro. Even according to that Degree or Meaſure of Tribulation, which our Heavenly Father hath Appointed and Ordained we ſhall paſs through, before we come unto, and enter into his Kingdom. So that whereas I before mentioned, that thoſe Troubles and Afflictons its coming on me immediately after my cloſe walking with waiting on the Lord did ſeveral times heretofore make me abate & diminiſh from my former Zeal and Fervency, This was my Ignorance and Infirmity then. For now I perceive when I Underſtand things more, and aright, they ſhould rather have encreaſed and heightned and confirmed it ſo much the more. For hereby then Satan did get an Advantage over me, but if I had ſo done, as I now ſee that I ſhould have done, then I ſhould not only have made his own Devices of none Effect, but have turned and made them fall back upon himſelf. For this is the beſt way to deal with an Enemy, to turn his own Canon upon himſelf; and not only to ſpoil the Mines, but to ſpring thoſe Mines upon themſelves, which they had lain to Blow us up; or according to the Scripture Phraſe herein, that themſelves may fall into the Pit which they had digged for others. As it is written, *Thou haſt ſhewed thy People hard things, thou haſt given us to drink the Wine of Aſtoniſhment.* So *Jeremiah* had hard thoughts of God, when he ſaid, *Wilt thou be unto me altogether as a Liar, and as Waters that fail?* Jer. 15. 18. So I ſpeak it to my ſhame, and as a warning and inſtruction

ction to others, I have had hard thoughts of God, that whereas he had revealed himself to be good to *Israel*, even to such as are of a clean Heart, that even when I was by his Grace upon making my Heart clean then to receive Crosses and Disappointments, which our Fretful and Impatient Nature calls Evils, then was fulfilled, But as for me, *my Feet were almost gone, my Steps had well nigh slipt, even* to have turned aside utterly from the Way of the Lord, or to have fallen down and go no further therein. And truly unless it had been for some forcible Considerations drawn from the near Approaches of Death, and the succeeding Judgment which God put into my Mind, and they did weigh down, and overrule to continue still in his Service (Blessed be his Name for it) I believe, and am afraid, that I had been an utter Apostate from the Ways of God.

Moreover that the Heart be without Knowledge it is not Good, said *Solomon*. But from hence we may see that Exceeding Advantage and Benefit of a full and through Knowledge concerning the things of God. It is all in all and the turning Point whereon doth depend the Eternal Salvation or Condemnation of Mankind. For where any one is saved, it is by Grace and Faith (both which do include within themselves a Knowledge of the unseen things of God) that they are saved. And so it is on the other Hand, *My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge*, Hos. 4. 6. Which will be found true as to those Miserable Souls at the last Day, *who shall be Punished with Everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*, 2 Thess. 1. 9. For had they known more of the things of God (and it was their own Fault and Negligence that they did not) they had escaped and never came to that State of final Condemnation and Perdition.

The Consideration hereof is an Unanswerable Argument, why we should do according to the Counsel and Directi-

Direction of *Solomon*, *A Wise Man will hear, and will increase Learning*, Prov. 1. 5. And for that End we should take and lay hold on all Opportunities for Hearing the Word, and not be Ignorantly Confined to a dead and dull Ministry, or be blindly given up to follow a Blind Guide, and none else: But in the *Multitude of Counsellors there is Safety*, both in Temporal and also in Eternal Concerns.

This Truth and Observation I make known, or rathea declare unto ye in the General, that ye may just perceive of what exceeding Use and Benefit and Edification it is to know *fully* and *throughly* (By both which Adverbs I difference it from that Knowledge in Part or by Halves, which is but a little coming forth out of Ignorance, and People should never sit down with a Knowledge in part, or at halves) the Nature of God's Kingdom and Dominion over Men, particularly in that Branch thereof, which relates to the *Prosperity of the Wicked*, or the *Afflictions of the Righteous*. For this hath been a mighty Stumbling Block, which hath hitherto hindred many People from coming into the Way of the Lord, and others from walking on and continuing therein. This also hath a mighty Influence over the Minds of Men, in as much as it is Sensible and Visible. The Apostle *Paul* cautions those he writes unto, *That they be not soon Moved or Shaken in Mind at the Afflictions which hath befaln him*; knowing that thereunto we were appointed. And it being so contrary unto the Natural Prudence and Wisdom of Men, to undertake or espouse a broken Cause, or to embarke ones self in a Shipwrackt Vessel, hereupon it was that Christ Crucified, was to the Greeks Foolishness (as his Meanness and Condescention therein, was to the Jews a Sumbling Block, inasmuch as they supposed that the Messias would be outwardly Glorious and Victorious over all his Enemies) for the Greeks could not think it Consistent with their Vain Philosophy, or Moral Wisdom to receive and be *partakers of the Afflictions of the Gospel*.

pel. And ſo far indeed it is true, that conſider it meerly as a Man within the Limits of this preſent Life & ſhort Time, this Wiſdom will never be juſtified by her Children. But let Faith come in, the Subſtance of things hoped for, which are to come, and the Evidence of things not ſeen; and this will quickly weigh down the Scale, and determine it, and carry it for the Knowledge of God and of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Thus much is Univerſally Received and Acknowledged in this Chriſtian Nation and Country of our Nativity and Habitation. But ſtill there is that mixture of Unbelief, and ſo much which ſavours of Men, and of the Worldly and Fleſhly Nature, that it cannot throughly reliſh and digeſt Afflictions in the Ways of God, nor yet have they that Knowledge of the Moſt High, as to perceive his Favour and Loving Kindneſs therein, which is certainly true. *For whom the Lord loveth, he Chaſteth, according to what the Spirit ſaith, As many as I love, I Rebuke and Chaſten,* Rev. 3. 19. Many are apt to doubt of the Favour of God, or to think they are not in the right way of his Worſhip (I have heard of Examples of this kind) becauſe of thoſe great continued Afflictions and outward Croſſes they meet with in the World. But herein all theſe People do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the Power of God, nor the Way of the Diſpenſation of his Kingdom towards us Men. For the Reaſon and End of theſe Afflictions are to prove and try them yet more, what is in their Heart, as Gold is tried in the Fire, and they are deſigned to draw us nearer and cloſer to God, as alſo to wean us the more from this preſent World. As it was noted before concerning the Proſperity of the Wicked, that they had their Portion in this Life, God intending thereby to Reward them here for that little Good they had done, for none is ſo bad, but doth ſome little good or other. So it is here on the other Hand, there is a *ſpot even of God's Children,* Deut. 32. 5. And there was hardly e-

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ver any one ſo Righteous upon Earth (Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous excepted) who did not in ſome little thing or other put forth their Hand to Iniquity. They committed or Conſented to Iniquity leſs or more; but they did not make a Trade or Continuance of it. For this cauſe *they are here Chaſtened of the Lord, that they ſhould not be Condemned with the World*, 1 Cor. 11. 30, 31. Then it is that People do err, when they do not know the Scriptures. For in theſe Scriptures very much is ſaid concerning the Proſperity of the Wicked, and the Afflictions of the Righteous. So much whereof hath been here declared and alledged out from thence, that the Reader may Judge and Underſtand in like manner of all the reſt. As the ſeveral things concerning it do ariſe up in his Thoughts, or as they find from their own Experiences, as alſo from the Obſervation they make from their own ſelves, as alſo from others abroad in the World, *Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord and Read*; for there a Knowledge and Reaſon of the things of God may be had and underſtood. To know a thing as it ought to to be known, is to know it by its Conſequences and with the Reaſons thereof.

Now of the things which we have ſpoken, this is the Sum. We have heard of the Nature of God's Kingdom and Dominion over Men, as the ſame is to prove and try them, to know what is in their Heart, and in order thereto, Secondly, God hath Eſtabliſhed for all Nations an *Obedience of Faith*. And Thirdly, All things happen alike to all, and alſo as a conſequent from the Firſt, he hath ſuffered the Proſperity of the Wicked, and to Exerciſe the latter yet more, he hath ordained Troubles and Afflictions for the Righteous. All theſe ſeveral Heads of Diſcourſe do hang and depend one upon another, as they are indeed and in reality linked on and connected together in the great Order and Concatenation of the things of God.

It

It now remains to shew how the right Understanding of the Nature of God's Kingdom and Dominion over Men, as it stands in this Order, and on this Wise, is a necessary help towards the making a Continuing and Persevering Work of it.

Sin and Ungodliness do certainly hinder from making a Continuing and Persevering Work of it, they being quite opposite and contrary thereunto, as Transgression is contrary to Obedience, and the Service of God is Diametrically Opposite, and Perfectly Contrary to no Service at all. And therefore in order to make a continuing and persevering Work of it, we must Sin not, and deny all Ungodliness. The Principal I had almost said, only Reasons why all the froward Inhabitants of the Earth do Sin against God, are these three. 1*st*, Because God doth not Render present Punishment. 2*dly*, Because God is out of sight. And 3*dly*, Because God holds his Tongue, or keeps Silence. Now (observe this) a Right Understanding of the Nature of God's Kingdom and Dominion over us Men, as before Explained, doth answer all these and the like Imaginations in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience, or the Ignorant Multitude. For the same Word of Truth which saith, Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil; elsewhere speaks on this wise, *I will Punish the World for their Evil, and the Wicked for their Iniquity*, Isa. 13.11. The Punishment of God is almost throughout the whole Scripture, spoken of in the future Sence, he will or shall Punish. I do hereby tell and warn the Sinners and Transgressors and Hypocrites of this my Generation, who bless themselves in their Heart, saying, They shall have Peace and Safety,, although they walk in the Imagination of their Heart, to add one Sin to another. Who are apt to fancy as if God could not, or would not Punish, Because he doth

not

not Punish them presently, nor strike them dead in their sins. Hear ye this Word and Tremble, it is as easy for God to Punish them, or any of us, as for we to crush a Moth or kill the least Fly or Insect. For he taketh away our Breath, and we Dye, & then the sentence which was not before speedily executed upon evil doers, doth begin to be executed upon them. There is no need to pour down Judgments outwardly upon the Sinners Head, as he did upon the Cities of the Plain; for he can stir up a Disease from within, which shall fetch out the Soul to receive for its Sinful & Evil Deeds. Saith one, *It is easy for the Lord to recompence a Man according to his ways in the day of his Death.* Nay, He doth it not so properly in the exact and particular day of Ones Death, as afterwards: for as when we begin an Action or Commence a Suit at Law against any Man, we do first Arrest him by such a Baylif or Inferiour Officer, So God hath his Sergeant or Messenger who sits upon a Pale Horse, whose Name is *Death*, and enters into Palaces all One as common Houses (for no Place or Person is Priviledged against him) who arrests severally all the Men and Women of all Generations and Countries, and fetches out their *Souls from their Bodies*, Luke 12. 20. And then God begins his Process or Proceedings against them, according to what they have done in this Life, whither Good or Evil. God could have Punished Man in this Life and on this Earth, If he had so pleased. But his general Decree is to spare them here, expecting that his Goodness, Forbearance and Long Suffering should lead them to Repentance; but when he hath given them a space to Repent, and they Repented not, then comes Retribution and Punishment. In this Life man doth Despise and Provoke the Lord God, but by Death God takes Vengeance on Man. *For the Wrath of God is Revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*, Rom. 1. 18. Mark here diligently how it is expressed, It is *Revealed*, that is

is as much as to ſay, It is made known from Heaven; but it is not yet executed and ſenſibly felt, which will then be after the Breath of Men is gone out of their Noſtrils, and their Souls are departed from their Bodies; or rather when they come to riſe up, and be Reunited again, then they ſhall receive according to what they did in them in this Life and on this Earth. On this wiſe all the great Promiſes and Threatnings of God do ſtand: The Promiſes are now revealed or made known from Heaven, they belonging unto Godlineſs and Righteouſneſs, but are not yet Actually given. But they ſhall be certainly given in the appointed time, or rather at the End of time. And ſo the Threatnings are *Revealed* or made known from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men (by which laſt Word is ſignified all that is contrary unto that great and compleat Rule of Righteouſneſs in Scripture, Comprehending all our Duty to God as well as to our Neighbour; and not only Injuſtice and Wrong between Man and Man, although this is included alſo, it being contrary to that great and compleat Rule of Righteouſneſs therein mentioned) but God doth not execute his Threatnings preſently, nor yet are they ſenſibly felt by the Children of Men. Which yet ſome of them will ſenſibly feel, Smart and Groan under, after that their Spirits are deceaſed or departed from theſe Bodies of Clay, and are removed to another place then this Earth. God hath another place beſides this Earth, and another time beſides this Life, to fulfil and make good every thing to the leaſt little that he hath now ſpoken unto the Inhabitants of this Earth, in his written and Revealed Word.

The Bruitiſh Man and Unbeliever, and Ignorant Perſons are apt to put off all this with a tranſient Jeſt, or their way of Proverb, What, Shall I ſpeak of it after I am Dead? Shall I feel Puniſhment when my Body can feel nothing, Implying as if there was an Impoſſibility in

in this. No ſuch matter. Behold I ſhew you a Myſtery' Neither they, nor we ſhall Dye; but we ſhall be all changed. How now? What doſt thou contradict Scripture and the Experience of all Mankind? It is appointed to Men once to Dye. Notwithſtanding that I will however make out what I before ſaid and affirmed, that neither we nor yet Unbelievers ſhall ever Dye. We, that is our ſelves, our Souls ſhall not Dye. This is moſt true. For it is only the Body that Dies, then ſhall the Duſt return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit to God who gave it. Then the Soul doth only deceaſe or depart from this Earthly Houſe God knows where. Hence Death is properly called a Deceaſe or Departure. Our Life is *only taken off from the Earth*, Acts 8. 33. but continued elſewhere And ſo the Soul is equally alive the next Hour or Day after her departure from the Body, all one as ſhe was when ſhe was in it. And it returns to God who gave it. And then ſhe hath a more Lively Hope or Comfortable Aſſurance of good things from him, or a Fearful Expectation of Evil things, according as ſhe hath behaved he ſelf well or ill in the Body.

The ſhewing unto ye this Myſtery doth alſo anſwer thoſe two other Imaginations in the Children of Diſobedience, which emboldens them to Sin or Tranſgreſs againſt him, becauſe he is out of ſight and he now keeps Silence. For beſides, that the ſame Word of Truth which ſaith, *No Man hath ſeen God at any time*, Joh. 1. 18. doth elſewhere acquaint us with the *Glorious Appearing of the Great God*, Tit. 2. 13. And how that it ſhall be one day ſaid *to the Cities of* Judah, *Behold your God*, Iſa. 4?. 9. The ſame Word, which doth take notice, how that God *hath a long time refrained himſelf, and held his Peace, even of Old*, Iſa. 57. 11. There it is added, *And thou feareſt me not*,. Even for that ſame Reaſon, *becauſe he held his Peace.* And ſo he *holdeth his Tongue when the Wicked Devoureth the Man that is more Righteous then he*, Hab. 1. 13.

And alſo whilſt that Evil, Iniquity and Treachery are Tranſacted, which is mentioned in the very ſame Verſe. And ſo it is whilſt the whole courſe of Sin and Tranſgreſſion goes on as the ſame is committed by the Generations of Mankind. *Theſe things haſt thou done and I kept Silence*, Pſal. 50. 21. Why here the ſame Word that expreſſes how God *holds his Peace, holds his Tongue, and keeps Silence*, doth alſo mention and aſſure us, *Our God ſhall come and ſhall not keep Silence. I will Reprove thee and ſet them in order before thine Eyes*, Pſal. 50 3. 21. Even all the things that were done in this Life, and on this Earth. Behold, how one Scripture anſwereth to another, for it is even ſo in the Order and Determination of God. And we ſhall ſee it accordingly ſo fulfilled as it is written in the Scriptures, when the Lord God of *Elijah* ſhall take away all the Generations of Mankind from this Earth, and ſhall cauſe the Dead to ariſe, and the great *Day* of his Judgment is come and the after State.

It was before mentioned, that though God is now out of ſight, yet at this very time he hideth himſelf, and ſtandeth behind the Skreen of his Viſible Creatures; yet Faith would find him out and perceive him for all that. As alſo an *Obedience of Faith* would approve our ſelves unto, and pleaſe him, all One as ever any Son or Servant did ſerve his Father or Maſter according to the Fleſh, whom he ſaw every day, and was almoſt continually with him. *An Obedience of Faith* muſt needs be accepted, becauſe it is ſuch an Obedience as God himſelf hath Ordained and Eſtabliſhed; and the reaſonable Creature in this State cannot render any other. But I do believe and conceive, that as it is written, *The Lord will come down in the ſight of all the People upon Mount* Sinah, Exod. 19. 11. And it is afterwards ſaid, *And Mount* Sinah *was altogether on a Smoke, becauſe the Lord deſcended upon it in Fire. And the Lord came down upon Mount* Sinah *on the top of the Mount*, V. 18 20. Which Lord in *Acts* 7. 38. is ſaid

to

to be the Angel, Supposed to be the Son of God, even Jesus Christ. We Read there, Verse 16. and *Exod.* 20. 18, 19. *Heb.* 12. 21. What effect it had upon *Moses* and upon all the People, as to cast a very great Awe, Terrour and Trembling upon them. The like is not to be expected again in this World. But this I do believe and conceive, that when the Inhabitants of the Earth of all Generations and Countreys from the Creation of the World unto the End thereof, shall be Summoned to meet with God by *D*eath and Judgment at the last Trump, *For the Trumpet shall Sound*, then they shall have a sensible and more lasting Apprehension of the Great and Infinite God himself in Person, then the *Israelites* had for the time of his Angel on Mount *Sinah*. For that particular Place, the whole Mount Quaked greatly, but then the Heavens and the Earth and the whole Creation will quake and be dissolved to be changed and Created a new. This also I do apprehend and conceive that in the mean while after the several respective *D*eaths of particular Persons until this great *D*ay, as it is written, *The Devils Believe, and Tremble.* So the Souls of such Men and Women who in the *D*ays of their Flesh were *D*isobedient and Provoking to God, will also Believe and Tremble. Yea, they will be *Magor Missabib*, *Fear round about*, Jer. 20. 3. Because that in the Invisible World they will have nothing to harden themselves, or to forget the sence of their approaching Condemnation and Misery, as now they have, as also, because they will be nearer unto, and know more of God unto whom all Flesh shall come.

The Apostle in 2 *Pet.* 3. makes the Use and Application of all this to our Hand, for he speaking there of the very same admonishes, *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all Holy Conversation and Godliness. Wherefore, Beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blameless.* Seeing that the Dispensation

penſation of the Kingdom and Dominion of God over Men ſtands on this wiſe, What can be a more forcible Motive and Perſuaſion then the Knowledge and Conſideration hereof for ye *to be ſtedfaſt Unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* For as much as ye haſte unto, and draw nearer, and muſt be let into theſe continuing things, the inference here is Reaſonable and Natural, *Wherefore Beloved, ſeeing that ye look for ſuch continuing Things*, be diligent that your ſelves continue in the Service of the Lord. I ſay, ye look for continuing things, which is oppoſite unto periſhing things, as ſuch are all preſent things, and things of this World.

I hope that none of ye do ſerve God for any viſible preſent Recompence as to thrive better in your Trades or Callings, and that ye are not in hopes to grow more Rich hereby and come to a place where his lively Word is declared, and his Spiritual Worſhip uſed out of any ſiniſter Reſpects and preſent Ends. If there was any thing to be got by it, what a Throng would be here? If ye do this, or the like, ye will be miſtaken. *For the Juſt ſhall Live by Faith.* He will ſeek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, and truſt that all theſe things ſhall be added unto it. The Terms we are to enter upon Gods Service, is Grace here and Glory hereafter; neceſſary Accommodations for our Pilgrimage, and the true Reſt to come; the Patriark *Jacob*'s Requeſt, *Bread to Eat and Raiment to put on*; and all this is to be had only by Labour and Honeſt means, and no others. But when People come to ſerve the Lord, if they have thoughts of any more, and they do not find their Ends and Expectations anſwered, then they leave off the Service of the Lord, which they would not have done, if they had known the Nature of God's Kingdom and the Way of his dealings towards the Children of Men. If there was a preſent Profit and Gain to be made by Religion, by every

every one that would try after it, then *none would Fear God for nought*, Job 1. 9. nor yet ſerve him for the alone Hope and Expectation of unſeen things. But People would traffick for Heaven, as they do to *Jamaica* or the *Indies*, and all ſtill for the Love of themſelves, and not out of any Love to the Lord of that Countrey. What a Company of Mercenary Souls ſhould we have? Then the places of Worſhip or Hearing the Word of God, would be Flocked unto, even upon Week *Days*, as the *Exchange*, or as Country People go to Fairs and Markets, to Buy and Sell and get Gain. Then Worldly Minded Men would become the beſt Chriſtians. Thoſe who are all for themſelves, uſe Religion only now and then to ſerve a turn, or for a reſerve: But if there was any thing to be got at preſent by ſo doing, ſuch would do moſt therein, and ſtill do nothing only for God's Sake. There would be then no *Work of Faith*, nor *Labour of Love*, but all Selfiſhneſs. But now, God hath moſt wiſely ordered it as it is, that the Trial of Faith might be had, that the Excellency of Obedience may be ſeen.

But yet more clearly it will appear, how the right Underſtanding of the Nature of God's Kingdom and *Dominion* over Men, helps to make a continuing Work, from this Remarkable Scripture, *Becauſe they have no changes, therefore they Fear not God*, Pſal. 55. 19. My Soul hath much Meditated upon this Scripture, it being ſo very Applicable and Suitable to the People abroad in the World, for is not this the very Reaſon of the want of the Fear of God? or when they talk of it in a General Way, yet ſtill there is not that real Awe and *Dread* of God upon their Hearts, but there is a ſecret Contempt of him, and a froward going on in the Way of their Hearts; as alſo a turning back from the Miniſtration of his Word. And all is, becauſe they have no changes, they ſee no odds, whither they do or do not. Sometimes in mine own private Prayer, every Morning and Evening, I have performed the ſame in a Perfunctory, Haſty and Careleſs manner; and ſometimes I have done it again more Solemnly, Awefully and Attentively. But I have obſerved no great matter of difference about the ſucceeding of my Actions the following day, whither I performed them in a due manner or not. Nay, Perhaps, It went more croſs and thwart when I was in the Morning before in fervent Prayer, then when I was remiſs or negligent. And hereupon an evil Heart of Unbelief hath aroſe in me, as if Prayers did ſignifie nothing; and there would be no great matter of difference, if they were ſaid meerly out of cuſtom or not at all. Is not this the very ſame as to other things pertaining to Religion? For do we ſee any odds or difference outwardly between *him that Sacrificeth, or him that Sacrificeth not?* Between them that go into the Sanctuary, or them that do not? Between them who are conſtant hearers of the Word, or who deſpiſe the Word of the Lord, and refuſe to come to the place where it is holden

den forth or Preached. Themſelves ſometimes make a trial of both, and they find no changes, and therefore they are Confirmed more and more in their Ungodlineſs. Moab *hath been at eaſe from his Youth, and he hath been ſetled on his Lees, and hath not been emptied from Veſſel to Veſſel, neither hath he gone into Captivity; therefore his taſte remained in him, and his ſcent is not changed*, Jer. 48. 11. Even that *Taſte* and *Scent* of the Old Corrupt and Ungodly Nature. Now as to all this and ſuch like Imaginations in the Hearts of Men (for by Thoughts or Imaginations, every One is led guided and doth accordingly) Here a right Underſtanding of the Nature of God's Kingdom and *Dominion* over us *Men*; How by the Ordering of things ſo as they are, he doth prove us, to know what is in our Hearts, whither we will keep his Commandments or no.

By the way, any one may chooſe whither he will keep the Commandments or not, but then they muſt not chooſe unto themſelves that Eternal Life which God hath Promiſed to the keeping of them; nor yet may they chooſe or refuſe to avoid that Eternal *Death*, which is annexed to the Contempt, *Diſobedience* and Tranſgreſſion of them.

God hath alſo Ordained an Obedience of Faith, hath Permitted all things to happen alike unto all, an *Hour* of the Wicked, and the *Power of Darkneſs*, Luke 22. 53. Proſperity to the Sinners, Adverſity to the Righteous. *But* above all, the Knowledge and Underſtanding that all things ſhall be exactly ſo as they are ſpoken of in the Scriptures, this will engage and oblige People to continue in the Fear of the Lord, whither they have any *changes* or no; whither they be at *eaſe from their Youth*, or *emptied from Veſſel to Veſſel*, even however it is with People in this Life, and on this Earth. They that know and underſtand all theſe things, they will continue yet more fixedly, firmly and conſtantly in the Fear of the Lord; and that ſo much the more, as they ſee the day Approaching.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 23. Line 36. for ſomirk, Read Irkſom.